launched a petition to "impeach the three presidencies", stating that the revised list did not deliver on the demands of the people.

4. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the inter-party political stalemate continued, preventing the functioning of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. In addition to fighting ISIL, the region also faces serious humanitarian, economic and fiscal challenges, compounded by the continuing differences over oil exports and revenue-sharing with the federal Government.

B. Political situation

5. On 20 February 2016, the Prime Minister sought the support of the Council of Representatives to initiate his plan for a "technocratic" cabinet, which legislators endorsed on the condition that the new ministers continue to implement the national political agreement and reforms. The leader of Ahrar Trend, Muqtada al-Sadr, expressed strong support for the restructuring of the Government and instructed his supporters to bolster public demonstrations in support of the reforms. He released his own reform plan on 13 February and set a 45-day deadline for the Prime Minister to conclude the process. The decision of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to refrain from publicly issuing pro-reform calls was followed by a more prominent role by al-Sadr in the pro-reform and anti-corruption movement.

6. Although all political blocs expressed their nominal support for the restructuring of the cabinet, they continued to disagree on a number of aspects and called on the Prime Minister to hold broad consultations to ensure political consensus. The National Alliance coalition held several meetings to resolve internal disagreements over the restructuring. Contrary to the Ahrar Trend, the State of Law and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq indicated their preference for a partial ministerial restructuring to be determined by the Prime Minister on the basis of an assessment of each minister's performance, without excluding the option of a complete change of government. On 2 March, the Kurdistan Alliance and the Iraqi Forces Coalition called upon the Prime Minister to ensure that the principles of inclusive partnership and balance among the main components, upon which the Government of national unity had been formed, would be maintained in the restructuring.

7. On 9 March, the Prime Minister's Office invited political blocs to each submit the names of two candidates for ministerial positions by 16 March. The letter of the Prime Minister was accompanied by a 105-page reform paper outlining the restructuring mechanism, notably that a committee of nonpartisan experts would receive and evaluate the credentials of the candidates for ministerial posts on the basis of criteria of professionalism and accountability, as well as a commitment to implement the national political agreement and reforms. The committee then recommend the most qualified candidates to the Prime Minister, who would then select the candidates and present them to the Council of Representatives for endorsement. On 17 March, the Iraqi Forces Coalition, the Kurdistan Alliance and the Wataniya Alliance issued statements expressing their concern about the openness of the process. Expressing its dissatisfaction for not being consulted on the selection process, the Iraqi Forces Coalition also announced that it would not nominate candidates for ministerial posts. In response to these concerns, the Prime

Minister issued a statement on 17 March reaffirming his commitment to consult more broadly with his political partners on the restructuring.

8. In separate statements between 16 and 19 March, the Council of Ministers, the three presidencies and the political blocs affirmed the right to peaceful demonstrations. They announced the formation of a committee representing all blocs, which would work with the Prime Minister on the restructuring and would directly negotiate with the demonstrators. The committee would also work to expedite reforms, bring all weapons and fighters under firm State control and counter corruption, in line with the demands of the demonstrators.

9. On 26 February, approximately 200,000 Iraqis staged a peaceful pro-reform and anti-corruption rally in Baghdad's Tahrir Square in response to a call by Muqtada al-Sadr for such protests. The protests were held until the end of the 45-day deadline he had given to the Prime Minister to form a new cabinet. On 12 March, Muqtada al-Sadr called for peaceful sit-ins at the entrance to the Green Zone in Baghdad in support of the pro-reform movement, which commenced on 18 March. Al-Sadr escalated the pressure when he entered the Green Zone for a personal sit-in on 27 March. Following the Prime Minister's statement on 31 March proposing a reduction of ministries from 21 to 18 and announcing a list of technocrats to restructure the Government, al-Sadr called off all protests around the Green Zone.

10. Further steps were taken towards the prosecution of officials accused of corruption and the recovery of State funds. On 18 February, the Commission of Public Integrity referred to the judiciary former Deputy Prime Ministers Bahaa al-Araji and Saleh al-Mutlaq; Farouk al-Araji, director of the military office of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki; and Naim Abo'ab, the former Mayor of Baghdad, on charges that they had exploited their positions to illegally accumulate wealth. On 20 February, the Council of Representatives, in coordination with relevant ministries and oversight bodies, formed a committee to follow up on the recovery of Iraqi funds smuggled abroad. In reaction to international press reports claiming that senior Iraqi officials had been involved in corruption related to oil contracts during the previous governments, the Prime Minister ordered an immediate investigation.

11. During the reporting period, the three presidencies continued their efforts to advance national and community reconciliation in Iraq. On 31 January, the President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, met with the Endowment and Religious Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives to discuss the role of religious figures and civil society in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence through community reconciliation. On 27 February, the parliamentary Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, presented a road map to achieve national reconciliation at a workshop on community reconciliation and social cohesion supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Prime Minister al-Abadi also attended the meeting. However, a number of challenges continued to hinder the reconciliation efforts, including the continued lack of trust and absence of political consensus, and the lack of a unified vision and framework for national reconciliation.

12. Political blocs held regular discussions in the Council of Representatives on priority legislation to promote reconciliation. On 14 March, the Ministry of Defence approved a draft law for compulsory military service to ensure inclusiveness in

Iraq's security institutions. However, the justice and accountability act, the banning of the Baath Party act, the Federal Court act and the national guard law remained stalled in Parliament.

13. During the reporting period, Iraq's economic and fiscal situation continued to be severely impacted by the decrease in global oil prices, wasteful and ineffective economic practices and corruption. These made it a challenge to finance the war against ISIL, address the humanitarian needs of the internally displaced and others and undertake reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. In February 2016, Iraq's oil revenues dropped despite export levels reaching the third-highest daily average of any month on record. In March, however, a partial recovery in world oil prices led to an increase in Iraq's oil revenue. On 20 March, Iraq also made its first ever shipments of natural gas out of Basra's Umm Qasr port.

14. The Kurdistan Regional Government released financial data in March indicating a monthly deficit of $370 million for operational costs.

15. With the severe economic and fiscal crisis affecting Baghdad and Erbil, and ongoing protests in different cities, the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government reengaged in discussion of outstanding issues. A delegation led by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, visited Baghdad on 31 January and 8 April, where it met with the President and the Prime Minister of Iraq to discuss the joint fight against ISIL, economic issues and the reform process. Separately, the Prime Minister of Iraq met with the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani, in Munich, Germany, in February. On 11 March, the Oil Minister, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, announced that Baghdad had ordered a cessation of oil exports pumped from Kirkuk to Ceyhan, Turkey. On 24 March, the Mr. Abdul-Mahdistated publicly that he had halted his presence at the ministry and cancelled all of his activities until a decision was made on his previously submitted resignation letter. He stated that his resignation was intended to provide the Prime Minister with the necessary space for his planned Government restructuring.

16. On 26 January, the President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq chaired a meeting of political parties in Erbil amid the political stalemate that had kept the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in recess since 23 October 2015. During the meeting, an inter-party committee was formed, comprised of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Islamic Union, to resolve the political crisis, including through dialogue with Gorran and the Kurdistan Islamic Group, who had boycotted the meeting. On 3 February, in an inter-party committee meeting, in which Gorran and the Kurdistan Islamic Group also participated, Gorran listed the reinstatement of its Speaker of Parliament and four ministers, as well as reforms to address the financial crisis and to counter corruption, as conditions for its reactivated participation in Parliament. On 2 March, the heads of political lists in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, including Gorran, held their first meeting in six months. All parties called for the political and financial crisis to be resolved as quickly as possible but did not reach any concrete agreement.

17. On 3 February, President Barzani reiterated his message that the time was appropriate for the people of the Kurdistan region of Iraq to decide on their future through a referendum. He added that such a referendum would not immediately lead to a declaration of statehood.

C. Security

18. The security situation in Iraq remained highly volatile during the reporting period. Militarily, pro-Government forces continued to register further successes in fighting ISIL. Operations focused on expanding control over parts of Anbar governorate and consolidating areas recently retaken from ISIL, specifically in central Ramadi. Preparations to retake areas remaining under ISIL control, including Mosul, continued. Government control over areas freed from ISIL in Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates was also consolidated. Although proceeding more slowly than expected, efforts were undertaken by Iraqi military and civilian experts, with international support, to accelerate clearance of improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance in Ramadi, essential for ensuring the safe return of internally displaced persons. Iraqi security forces, the popular mobilization forces, tribal fighters and Peshmerga continued to make steady progress in pushing ISIL back with support from the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and other partners.

19. On 20 February, the Prime Minister announced in the Council of Representatives that the popular mobilization forces would be included in military operations to retake Mosul. On 29 February, in response to the Prime Minister's announcement, the Ninewa Provincial Council voted to reject the inclusion of the popular mobilization forces, noting allegations of poor conduct in other retaken areas. After intensive discussions among political blocs, the President of Iraq confirmed on 17 March that all forces would participate in the Mosul liberation campaign, but neither the popular mobilization forces nor the Peshmerga would enter the city once ISIL was expelled.

20. The security situation in areas freed from ISIL continues to be challenging owing to terrorist, sectarian, intercommunal and criminal violence. On 29 February, in Muqdadiya, Diyala governorate, a suicide attack, for which ISIL claimed responsibility, took place at a Shiite funeral ceremony, killing 19 civilians and wounding 33. Fifteen members of the popular mobilization forces were also killed and 10 wounded. On 1 and 9 March, the Speaker of Parliament and other Iraqi Forces Coalition leaders expressed grave concern that reported reprisal attacks against the Sunni community had taken place in Muqdadiya for the second time in a year, following terrorist attacks on the community, and called for urgent measures to bring all fighters and weapons under the firm control of the State. For his part, the Chair of the Iraqi Forces Coalition in the Council of Representatives, Ahmed al-Msari, issued calls for increased international guarantees and monitoring of the security situation in Diyala.

21. On 25 March, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive belt at a football match in Iskandariya, Babil governorate, reportedly killing 29 people and wounding 50 others. On 29 March, a suicide belt attack targeted a group of workers in Tayaran Square in central Baghdad, reportedly killing 10 people and wounding 31. ISIL claimed responsibility for both attacks.

22. Baghdad continued to see the highest rate of attacks targeting civilians in the country, for which ISIL claimed responsibility. During the reporting period, Baghdad witnessed 301 incidents targeting civilians and 78 incidents targeting the Iraqi security forces. Among the deadliest incidents was a 28 February suicide attack in Sadr City, which killed at least 24 civilians and wounded 62. Unidentified

bodies continued to be found on a near daily basis in Baghdad city and its outlying areas.

D. Regional and international developments

23. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq continued its international and regional engagement to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral relations and to secure political, military and economic support for humanitarian and reconstruction needs and in the fight against ISIL. Discussions also began with international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, on fiscal support after economic and fiscal reforms are introduced by Baghdad and Erbil.

24. High-level delegations from the Government of Iraq conducted bilateral visits to Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy to seek military assistance and support for reconstruction and to strengthen economic cooperation. During a visit to Cairo from 7 to 10 March, the President of Iraq announced that he had discussed with the President of Egypt prospects for military support to professionalize the Iraqi army.

25. On 8 March, in an effort to secure a new oil export route to boost Iraq's revenues, the Oil Minister of Iraq met with the Prime Minister of Egypt and the Energy Minister of Jordan in Cairo. After the meeting, the Petroleum Minister of Egypt announced that the three ministers had agreed on an oil pipeline project from Basra, Iraq, to Aqaba, Jordan. In February, the Oil Minister of Iraq also met with his counterparts from the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Venezuela to discuss measures to address declining oil prices.

26. In mid-February, the Prime Minister of Iraq attended the annual Munich Security Conference in Germany, where he pledged to fully uproot ISIL from Iraq in 2016. World leaders present at the Conference pledged ongoing military and other support to Iraq. The Minister of the Interior of Iraq attended the 33rd session of the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior, held in Tunis on 2 and 3 March. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Ministers released the "Tunis Declaration", in which they condemned all acts of terrorism, including those directed against ethnic minorities, and called for efforts by Arab States to tackle the financing of terrorism in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions. On 11 March, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, participated in the extraordinary session of the Council of the Arab League, where member States condemned all forms of terrorism and its financing. Meanwhile, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, visiting Iraq on 26 and 27 March, reaffirmed his organization's support for Iraq as well as its readiness to facilitate a national unity convention to be called "Mecca II", in the format of the Mecca Conference held in 2006. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq conveyed his Government's support for such a conference.

27. The Global Coalition to Counter ISIL pledged ongoing support for Iraq at a meeting on 2 February in Rome attended by my Special Representative and the Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. The ministers for foreign affairs of the Small Group of the Global Coalition praised the work of the UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization and called for additional contributions to the fund, to the United Nations humanitarian appeal for

Iraq and for demining, which was critically needed to enable stabilization, rehabilitation and the return of internally displaced persons. The Small Group also pledged to continue supporting the training of the Iraqi police forces to hold and stabilize areas recaptured from ISIL. At a subsequent meeting in Brussels on 11 February, defence ministers of the Global Coalition further reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate and intensify counter-ISIL efforts.

28. On 14 March, the Speaker of Parliament of Iraq visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he met with the King, the Deputy Crown Prince, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Speaker of Parliament. The interlocutors discussed means of promoting bilateral and regional relations and strengthening their joint efforts in the fight against ISIL and in confronting terrorism. They also highlighted the need for both countries to build strong ties to confront the challenges facing the region.

29. Relations between Iraq and a number of Gulf Cooperation Council members, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, were tested during the reporting period on account of those countries' public statements about the conduct and legality of the popular mobilization forces.

30. Iraq and Turkey did not manage to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Turkish military presence in Bashiqa camp, in northern Iraq. On 4 February, on the margins of a donor conference in support of the Syrian Arab Republic and the region in London, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq met with the Prime Minister of Turkey to discuss a possible solution that would fully respect the sovereignty of Iraq. My Special Representative also visited Ankara on 8 February, where he met with representatives of the Government of Turkey.

31. Meanwhile, Turkish air strikes against Kurdistan Workers Party targets in the Kurdistan region of Iraq continued during the reporting period, concentrated in remote villages of Amedi and Zakho districts in Dohuk governorate, as well as other locations in Erbil governorate.

32. Iraq, together with its international partners, took important steps to call for accountability for the crimes that ISIL has perpetrated against the people of Iraq. While in Rome on 10 February, the Prime Minister of Iraq met with Pope Francis to discuss the crimes committed by ISIL against Christians living in Iraq. On 14 March, the United States Congress adopted a resolution acknowledging that the crimes of ISIL constituted international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. On 17 March, the Secretary of State of the United States asserted that in his judgement, ISIL was responsible for "genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians and Shia Muslims" and for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. He affirmed that the United States would strongly support efforts to collect, document, preserve and analyse the evidence of atrocities and would do all it could to see that the perpetrators were held accountable.

III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations Country Team

A. Political activities

33. On 26 March, I paid a visit to Iraq, together with the President of the World Bank Group, Jim Yong Kim, and the President of the Islamic Development Bank, Ahmad Mohamed Ali, and had discussions with the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and other high-level officials. I congratulated the people of Iraq on steady victories against ISIL and lauded the heroism and sacrifices of the Iraqi security forces, the popular mobilization forces, the Peshmerga and the tribal forces. I stressed the importance of an inclusive political process that would weaken support for ISIL and reinforce Iraq's unity. I encouraged the Prime Minister to continue efforts to overcome political polarization and divisions and to work on strengthening the partnership between Baghdad and Erbil. I welcomed the Prime Minister's reform agenda and confirmed the support of the United Nations for it. The President of the World Bank Group, the President of the Islamic Development Bank and I pledged the support of the international community to address Iraq's humanitarian needs and fiscal difficulties. In Erbil, we met with the President and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Throughout the visit, we highlighted the paramount importance of comprehensive economic reforms and increased transparency.

34. On 7 February, my Special Representative facilitated a meeting of representatives of the Group of Seven countries in Baghdad, as well as the representatives of the European Union and the World Bank, with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance of Iraq, to discuss the fiscal and economic difficulties facing Iraq and possible reforms to overcome them. A meeting with the same objective was facilitated on 7 March with the President and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. These efforts received positive responses from Iraqi leaders and some leaders of the Kurdistan region of Iraq as an opportunity for the international community to better understand the depth of the crisis and the reforms planned or implemented by the authorities.

35. The United Nations marked Interfaith Harmony Week from 2 to 10 February with a number of UNAMI-organized events in Najaf, Baghdad and Erbil aimed at promoting coexistence, cohesion and forgiveness, and reconciliation at all social levels. The events were attended by a wide range of stakeholders, including parliamentarians, international community representatives, religious and cultural leaders, civil society representatives and youth groups. The discussions emphasized the importance of inclusive dialogue as well as the need for durable solutions to help internally displaced persons in the country, and education and awareness programmes to steer youth away from extremist ideologies. They further underlined the need for the Government to make progress on improving intercommunal relations and to swiftly restore State and local authority, rule of law, good governance, justice and services to liberated areas.

36. UNAMI continued its efforts to promote women's rights in Iraq in support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). With support from UNAMI, civil society representatives, including members of the 1325 Alliance and the Iraqi Women's Network, continued to press for women's inclusion in national

reconciliation efforts, as well as wider national political processes. On 7 March, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in partnership with the Women's Parliamentary Committee, organized a high-level event at the Council of Representatives marking International Women's Day.

37. In Baghdad, on 12 March, a conference titled "The establishment of the Civil Peace and Social Coexistence Network" was jointly organized by the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation of the Prime Minister's Office and UNAMI. The conference brought together over 100 representatives from civil society organizations to discuss how to promote their active engagement in political and community reconciliation and in combating ethno-sectarian and area-based segregation, as well as in advancing national reconciliation and social peace.

38. My Special Representative undertook several visits to the Kurdistan region of Iraq to encourage cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad. In addition, he continued to encourage Kurdish political parties to break the ongoing political deadlock in the region through inclusive political dialogue.

B. Electoral assistance

39. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued supporting the Independent High Electoral Commission. My Special Representative convened a meeting on 3 March of the diplomatic community and the Chairperson and Chief Electoral Officer of the Commission. In the meeting, project proposals developed with support from UNAMI were presented for international funding consideration. UNAMI continued providing technical advice to the Commission in the planning of the 2017 Provincial Council elections, including in the development of a concept of operations and a timeline. UNAMI also continued supporting the Commission in developing an institutional gender policy and related training. UNAMI is further providing expertise to the Commission on new procedures for election results management, as well as ongoing assistance in the establishment of the newly created Political Entities Directorate. On 3 April, the Independent High Electoral Commission commenced biometric registration for internally displaced voters in 11 governorates.

40. UNAMI continued to engage the Council of Representatives regarding parliamentary oversight of electoral processes. On 18 February, UNAMI met with the Legal Committee of the Council to consider proposed amendments to the electoral law for provincial, district and subdistrict councils, and the process for selecting the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The terms of the current commissioners expire in 2017. UNAMI also sought the views of the Committee on the memorandum of understanding between the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission, under consideration by the Council of Representatives.

C. Human rights developments and activities

41. Iraqis continue to be affected by armed conflict, acts of violence and terrorism. From 27 January to 31 March 2016, UNAMI recorded a minimum of 3,418 civilian

casualties (1,039 killed and 2,379 wounded), bringing the total number of civilian casualties since the upsurge of violence and armed conflict in the country that commenced in January 2014 to at least 62,656 (21,272 killed and 41,384 wounded).

42. During the reporting period, there was a rise in asymmetric and terrorist attacks, many claimed by ISIL, resulting in high numbers of civilian casualties. A five-day period beginning on 25 February saw particularly high levels of violence after two suicide bombers attacked a Shiite mosque in Baghdad, killing eight civilians and wounding 18. On 28 February, also in Baghdad, two suicide bombers targeted a market in a Shia-majority area, killing at least 24 civilians and wounding 62. On 6 March, a suicide attack on the main checkpoint entrance to Hilla city, Babil governorate, killed 31 civilians and 10 police officers. On 25 March, a terrorist bombing at a football ground in Babil governorate killed and injured many civilians.

43. Women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, as well as members of ethnic and religious communities, continue to be particularly vulnerable to serious abuses and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Numerous reports of such violations, particularly by ISIL, continued to be received by UNAMI. At least 1,500 women and children, mostly from the Yezidi community but also from other ethnic and religious communities, remain in captivity by ISIL, and I continue to have grave fears for their safety.

44. UNAMI continued to receive reports of abductions, killings and persecution by ISIL of those opposed to its ideology or rule. On 1 February, in Mosul, Ninewa governorate, ISIL abducted three café owners for alleged breaches of their "code of conduct" and, on 6 February, amputated the hands of three teenagers accused of theft. ISIL killed at least seven civilians accused of cooperating with the Iraqi security forces by drowning them on 13 February. On 22 February, ISIL publicly murdered four men southwest of Kirkuk following accusations that they had cooperated with the Iraqi security forces.

45. Reports of worsening living conditions in ISIL-controlled areas persist, as well as of civilians continuing to be killed by ISIL for trying to flee. On 29 February, ISIL killed and subsequently hanged from a pylon a man in Mosul district, and reportedly murdered, on 6 March, three young men for attempting to flee Hawija district, in Kirkuk governorate.

46. During the reporting period, it was reported that ISIL used weaponized chemical agents. On 11 February, ISIL mortar attacks against the Peshmerga south of Sinjar district, Ninewa governorate, reportedly resulted in at least nine officers suffering suffocation, dizziness and sore eyes. ISIL attacks on Peshmerga positions on 17 February in Makhmur district, on 25 February in Sinjar district and on 2 March in Tal-Afar district (all in Ninewa), resulted in Peshmerga and civilians suffering from similar ailments. On 8 March, a rocket attack in Tazah district, Kirkuk governorate, caused breathing difficulties for a number of people who were subsequently admitted to hospital. A three-year-old girl and a nine-year-old girl died from complications believed to stem from the effects of that attack. UNAMI could not verify that weaponized chemical agents were used, and these reports have not been officially substantiated. In a letter dated 20 March 2016 (S/2016/267, annex), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq informed the Security Council of the incident in Tazah and noted that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons had been notified of the incident.

47. Mass graves continued to be discovered in Iraq, including one containing an undetermined number of bodies in central Ramadi, Anbar governorate, on 23 January. The victims had reportedly been killed by ISIL in May 2015 when it took over the city. On 16 February, it was reported that a mass grave containing the remains of approximately 40 individuals was discovered in eastern Ramadi, where security officials also reported the discovery on 2 March of a grave containing the bodies of seven police officers. Gathering evidence is challenging according to Government officials, who state they lack the resources and expertise to adequately protect or excavate these sites.

48. Reports continued to be received by UNAMI about human rights violations perpetrated by armed groups reportedly associated with the popular mobilization forces. On 1 March, members of such groups killed a civilian, wounded several civilians and destroyed three houses in different areas of Muqdadiya, Diyala governorate. On the same day, they reportedly abducted seven civilians from the Sunni Arab community in Muqdadiya and Baquba. UNAMI also received reports alleging the same groups' involvement in preventing the return of internally displaced persons to the retaken Balad district of Salah al-Din governorate. Tensions triggered by the distribution of compensation to victims and families of victims of previous ISIL and Al-Qaida attacks had initially flared on 7 February. Sources reported that between 7 and 9 February, a number of homes belonging to displaced persons, as well as businesses, were destroyed by explosives planted by unidentified local members of such groups to prevent the return of their owners to Balad district.

49. Air strikes and shelling continued to cause civilian casualties, including a 4 February air strike alleged to have caused an undetermined number of casualties in Hit, Anbar governorate. On 8 and 9 February, shelling, reportedly by ISIL, caused civilian casualties in Amiriyat al-Fallujah, Anbar governorate. On 15 February, an air strike reportedly killed five civilians in Shirqat district, Salah al-Din governorate. On 18 February, air strikes reportedly caused civilian casualties in Rutba and Hit, Anbar. On 7 March, an air strike in Hit reportedly killed five civilians. Challenges in information verification hampered the confirmation of the number of casualties and the determination of responsibility for such incidents.

50. During the reporting period, 57 incidents of grave violations against children were reported to the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Of these, killing and maiming continued to be the most frequently reported violations, with 83 children confirmed killed and 90 maimed. Owing to a lack of access and security restrictions, cases of recruitment and use of children by ISIL could not be verified. The Task Force also received information on five attacks on schools, mainly in Baghdad and Diyala. Meanwhile, military operations in conflict-affected areas continued to severely hamper children's access to education and health.

51. On 18 February, the Central Criminal Court in Baghdad sentenced 40 to death for involvement in the June 2014 Camp Speicher events. The trial, known as Speicher Three, was monitored by UNAMI and fell short of international fair trial standards, including in the lack of an effective defence for the accused and failure to investigate allegations of torture. The sentences have been referred to the Court of Cassation on appeal as required by Iraqi law.

52. The Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues visited Iraq from 27 February to 7 March. She held meetings with the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Prime Minister

of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in Baghdad and Erbil; consulted numerous leaders from Iraq's ethnic and religious communities; and visited displacement camps in Dohuk governorate. Following her visit, the Special Rapporteur stressed the need for additional assistance and support for Iraqis displaced by conflict, as well as the need to acknowledge and tackle longstanding societal discrimination and marginalization of ethnic and religious groups.

D. Camp New Iraq and Camp Hurriya

53. The United Nations continued to monitor the humanitarian situation of the residents of Camp Hurriya. To date, 1,898 residents remain in the camp and 1,173 have relocated to third countries. During the reporting period, 55 residents relocated from Iraq. On 24, 25 and 26 February, a group of family members of the residents visited the Camp's police station to meet relatives residing in the camp. The residents, however, refused to meet the visitors and expressed their objection to such visits. My Special Adviser for the Relocation of Camp Hurriya residents Outside of Iraq continues to lead efforts, together with relevant stakeholders, to relocate the remaining residents.

E. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

54. The number of people in Iraq requiring humanitarian assistance has doubled in the past year. At least 10 million Iraqis require some form of assistance, including 3.3 million internally displaced persons, about 550,000 returnees and nearly 250,000 Syrian refugees. Depending on the intensity of military operations, the United Nations estimates that another 2 to 3 million civilians may be in need by the end of 2016 and forced to seek assistance from the Government, religious foundations and humanitarian organizations. Hundreds of thousands of people are likely to remain trapped in besieged areas in desperate need of assistance, with little or no opportunity to exit. Thousands of families are already caught between the front lines of opposing forces and many more are likely to become so in the coming months. Over 3 million people are estimated to live under ISIL control and are in need of assistance.

55. The security situation remains the single most important factor affecting humanitarian assistance and protection. Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk governorates, as well as southern Erbil, continue to be affected by active hostilities. Insecurity is also prevalent in Baghdad and Diyala, and continues to limit delivery of humanitarian assistance. Civilians fleeing violence are often victimized by parties to the conflict, held at checkpoints and prevented from entering safe areas and moving freely within certain camps, including the Nazrawa and Garmawa camps in Kirkuk and Ninewa governorates.

56. More than 55,000 people have been displaced in Anbar since military operations increased at the end of December 2015. Most of the newly displaced have arrived at overcrowded camps and temporary settlements in and around the Amiriyat al-Fallujah displacement complex, Habbaniyah tourist city and the Bzeibiz bridge. Additional displacement has occurred as a consequence of ongoing military operations west of Ramadi in Anbar governorate and in Makhmour district in Erbil governorate, where approximately 30,000 new internally displaced persons have

been settled in temporary camps and are being assisted. Military operations have also triggered new displacement of over 22,000 people around Samarra in Salah al-Din governorate. Humanitarian partners have scaled up the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, health and food assistance in response to the increasing needs.

57. Conditions in ISIL-controlled Fallujah are deeply worrying. For two years, regular clashes and aerial bombardment have caused widespread destruction, injury and death, while humanitarian access has been extremely limited. Although the United Nations is unable to access Fallujah city, information from local sources during the reporting period confirms that conditions are deteriorating rapidly. The majority of markets and shops in Fallujah are closed. The prices of basic commodities increased by over 800 per cent during the reporting period and staples such as rice are unavailable. The main power station is not functioning and the public water supply is limited to one day per week. There are indications of widespread shortages of medicine and credible reports of deaths. In late March, the Government informed the Humanitarian Coordinator that it intends to open safe corridors to allow civilians to exit the city.

58. In Ninewa governorate, 36 Sunni Arab families have been stranded between Peshmerga and ISIL front lines since mid-November 2015, with only intermittent access to humanitarian support. A local organization was able to access and assist the families with a 20-day supply of food and household items in February. Advocacy efforts are under way to ensure that families can cross into safer areas. In the light of continued military operations, a mechanism to ensure dignified, open and safe screening of people trying to leave conflict areas for safer territories is required.

59. The humanitarian operation in Iraq remains one of the most complex and largest in the region. More than 180 partners continue to provide life-saving assistance and protection, reaching more than 2.5 million people each month. UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP), in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration and nine non-governmental organizations, provided life-saving assistance through the rapid response mechanism to more than 150,000 newly displaced people in hard-to-reach areas in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Erbil governorates. Protection monitoring teams of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reached hundreds of thousands of at-risk women and girls, and child protection partners provided sustained psychosocial support to over 4,000 newly registered children. More than 1,500 cases of children with severe emotional distress and disabilities were referred for specialized services. UNFPA also provided reproductive health supplies to hundreds of hospitals and primary health-care and maternity units.

60. During the reporting period, more than 1.6 million displaced people and 46,700 refugees received monthly food assistance from WFP and its partners. FAO distributed fertilizer to vulnerable rural families in Ninewa governorate. WHO and health partners are reaching hundreds of thousands of at-risk Iraqis in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala and Salah al-Din governorates with basic health services and specialized referral services, and vaccinated 5.4 million children under five years of age against polio in all Iraq. With support from humanitarian agencies, led by UNICEF, millions of people now have

temporary and sustainable access to safe water and sanitation facilities in areas of displacement.

61. Education partners ensured that thousands of children benefited from learning materials and hundreds of teachers were trained in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala and Salah al-Din governorates. In cooperation with the ministries of education of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan region, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization provided access to secondary education to 1,099 Syrian refugees and 5,009 internally displaced students in camps and host communities through two projects funded by the Government of Japan. To meet winterization needs, humanitarian partners provided more than 378,000 displaced people and 68,000 refugees with household items and fuel.

62. Conditions in retaken areas are highly variable and it will take months to create conditions that allow for safe, voluntary and dignified returns to most retaken towns. To date, approximately 550,000 people have returned to areas retaken in Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates. Returns in many areas, including Ramadi and Sinjar, have been delayed by extensive contamination with explosive devices and the massive destruction of civilian infrastructure. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to provide strategic guidance to the Government of Iraq through the national operations centre, the Directorate of Mine Action and the Iraqi Kurdish Mine Action Authority, supporting the deployment of emergency operations and capacity-building activities.

63. Through the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization, and with the support of 18 international donors, UNDP continued to work under Government leadership to stabilize newly liberated areas. In November 2015, the Funding Facility Steering Committee, co-chaired by my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Support and the Government of Iraq, extended its work to nine liberated cities in Diyala, Ninewa and Anbar governorates. During the reporting period, nearly all of the populations in Al-Dour and Mkeishiefa, in Salah al-Din governorate, returned to their homes, supported by the Funding Facility, which helped to create a corridor of stability between them and Tikrit. In anticipation of the completion of explosive clearance activities in Ramadi, UNDP pre-positioned vital equipment, including mobile grids and generators, for dispatch as soon as areas are declared safe. In late March, the scope of the Funding Facility was expanded to four more retaken areas and a second funding channel for expanded stabilization was established. The new channel will focus on high-impact medium-scale projects to generate large numbers of jobs, encourage mass returns and consolidate corridors between stabilized cities and districts.

64. UNDP and UNFPA continued to help survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. UNFPA mobile support teams reached hundreds of victims, including women and girls fleeing ISIL, while UNDP-supported legal aid centres in Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk governorates provided free legal and psychosocial services to thousands of survivors from refugee and displaced populations. UNDP also continued to work with non-governmental organizations to raise awareness and provide training on sexual and gender-based violence case management, referrals and policing.

65. Since its completion in 1984, the Mosul dam has stored water from the Tigris River, generated electricity and reduced the risk of seasonal flooding. Unfortunately,

repairs essential to the dam's structural integrity were interrupted when ISIL occupied the facility and destroyed equipment. Although the dam is now under Government control, onsite and downstream sensors indicate that its diaphragm is under severe stress and the risk of a catastrophic outburst is real and increasing. Collapse of the dam would directly affect at least one third of the country's population. Efforts to prevent a collapse of the dam are under way. In February 2016, the Prime Minister approved a contract for an Italian engineering company to start maintenance work on the dam.

66. The United Nations is working with Iraqi authorities to prepare for the potential collapse of the dam. UNDP, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development, is helping the Government to set up and test an emergency alert and communication system to mobilize civil defence in the event of a breach. In March, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs deployed an expert on technological disasters from its joint unit with UNEP to help the Government establish protocols to activate international support in case of need. The collapse of the Mosul dam would also have a significant impact on United Nations operations in Iraq, including the safety and security of personnel and their dependants.

F. Security and operational issues

67. The process of articulating a 2016-2017 integrated strategic framework for the United Nations in Iraq will soon be completed. The framework will provide a common strategic vision to underpin the political, human rights and developmental objectives of UNAMI and the United Nations country team on the basis of an updated situational analysis.

68. United Nations personnel in Iraq continue to operate in a volatile security environment under challenging circumstances, and the United Nations security management system has had to implement extensive security management measures in order to mitigate prevalent threats. This reality was starkly highlighted when, on 15 February, the murder of UNAMI staff member Amer al-Kaissy was verified, following his abduction in Baquba, Diyala, on 26 April 2015 by unidentified gunmen.

69. The reporting period saw significant demonstrations in many parts of Iraq, including in close proximity to UNAMI compounds in Baghdad. The United Nations security management system continued to work with Government security agencies to mitigate the risk to staff safety and security posed by such events. Meanwhile, the United Nations is following up with the Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a view to concluding the status of mission agreement.

70. The limited availability of safe and secure accommodation in Baghdad for international United Nations staff continues to hamper the Organization's ability to implement its mandate and programmatic activities. In addition to the existing 185 accommodation units in the D-2 compound, 99 more units are in the pipeline; 10 units are likely to be completed by April 2016, 10 by September 2016 and the remaining 79 by the end of June 2017. The country team and UNAMI continue to require additional accommodation to conduct their programmes and operations countrywide.

IV. Observations

71. I extend my compliments to the Iraqi security forces, Peshmerga, popular mobilization forces and tribal volunteers on their steady victories against ISIL. I hope that this positive momentum will continue until the violence and hatred promoted by ISIL are eradicated.

72. It remains clear, however, that military operations alone will not eliminate the threat of terrorism in Iraq. Iraqi political leaders must overcome their mistrust and divisions and reach consensus on a single vision for reconciliation. They need to intensify their efforts to reach a compromise that would enable the passage of key legislation.

73. I welcome the continued efforts of the Prime Minister to pursue much-needed reforms in Iraq. I urge the Prime Minister to consult broadly throughout this process, ensuring also inclusive representation, particularly of women and all of Iraq's diverse components. It is important that the Government and all political actors continue to listen to the legitimate demands of the Iraqi public for meaningful and genuine reforms, protect their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and ensure their safety in the exercise of these rights.

74. Governmental restructuring is the first step to open the way for deeper reforms, particularly economic and institutional reforms that will improve the standard of living for all Iraqis. These reforms should include ongoing efforts to increase transparency and counter corruption; devolve centralized functions to local authorities to improve service delivery; implement pragmatic economic measures that will help to restructure public financial management, revenue collection and management of public assets; and diversify the economy and attract investments. I urge all of Iraq's political parties to fully support the Prime Minister in his efforts to implement the reforms that are urgently needed and requested by the Iraqi people. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to support these efforts through guidance and technical assistance.

75. The serious challenges that Iraq faces also require cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil in the spirit of genuine partnership. It is imperative that both sides remain committed to reaching an understanding on oil exports and revenue-sharing, Peshmerga salaries and other outstanding issues. I exhort the political parties in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to resolve the current political stalemate through inclusive dialogue on the basis of democratic and legal principles.

76. Activities that will ensure sustainable peace among communities after military victories against ISIL remain vital to securing Iraq's long-term stability. I urge the Government to continue to prioritize the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of the displaced to their places of origin in areas recovered from ISIL. The widespread contamination of Ramadi by improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war is of great concern. The scope of such contamination far exceeds national clearance capacities. International capacities need to be urgently mobilized and funded.

77. I also remain deeply concerned by continued reports of reprisal attacks against communities trying to rebuild their lives in areas liberated from ISIL, including in the areas of the disputed internal boundaries. I reiterate my call upon the

Government of Iraq to bring all fighters and weapons under its firm control and to hold to account those who violate the law.

78. I condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued killings, kidnappings, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL, which may constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and even genocide. I equally strongly condemn the continued suicide attacks by ISIL on public places, as well as places of worship, which kill civilians, including children. These attacks have the clear aim of stoking sectarian tensions in Iraq. Iraqis must refrain from resorting to violence and reprisal attacks, as these undermine the unity of Iraq and its people, and only work in favour of terrorism.

79. I am concerned by the reports that have emerged of the use of weaponized chemicals by ISIL in its attacks on civilians and security force personnel. I condemn any attempt by ISIL to use chemical agents as weapons, the use of which is prohibited and considered a violation under international law. I call upon the international community to support the Government of Iraq in its efforts to investigate these reports, offer appropriate care to those affected and ensure the accountability of anyone found to be involved in the use of weaponized chemicals against civilians or security force personnel.

80. I also call upon the international community to take steps to ensure the accountability of members of ISIL for the atrocious crimes they have perpetrated against the Iraqi people and to take steps to recognize the gravity of ISIL crimes. I furthermore urge the Government of Iraq to take urgent steps to address past crimes and violations by granting Iraqi courts appropriate jurisdiction over international crimes committed in Iraq, and to ensure that the perpetrators are tried in full compliance with due process and fair trial standards required by international law and the Constitution of Iraq.

81. I condemn in the strongest terms the killing of UNAMI staff member Amer al-Kaissy, following his abduction by unidentified gunmen in April 2015. It is the responsibility of the Iraqi authorities to conduct a thorough and open investigation and to bring the perpetrators to justice swiftly. I reiterate my call upon the authorities to do so.

82. The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues to be a source of great concern. Additional resources are urgently needed. The United Nations and its partners have requested $861 million for 2016 to provide emergency relief to 7.3 million vulnerable Iraqis. Only 15 per cent, or $128 million, has been received so far. Urgently mobilizing additional funds, including for assistance in areas retaken from ISIL, remains one of my highest priorities.

83. Lastly, I wish to extend my appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and all of the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their continued efforts in assisting the Government and people of Iraq. I trust that Iraq's international partners, including its neighbours, will continue to extend their support to my Special Representative in the implementation of his mandate.